

Church service is interrupted by gay activists throwing condoms

By Rosemary Harris/Gazette Telegraph

It was time for Scripture reading at Village Seven Presbyterian Church on Sunday, but a group of gay activists had something else in mind.

When Associate Pastor Jim Singleton asked congregants to open their Bibles, someone blew a loud, police-type whistle. Then, a dozen or so people in black leather jackets stood up, removed their coats and chanted in unison: "Gays and lesbians under attack in Colorado Springs. We act up. This is for Will Perkins. Enjoy your Sunday."

The group then pelted the congregation with condoms before leaving the church at 4050 S. Nonchalant Circle, said the senior pastor, the Rev. A. Bernhard Kuiper.

Police were not called.

"There was no warning that this would hap-



Kuiper: Saw no warning signs before protest happened.

pen," Kuiper said a few hours after the services. "It didn't seem to be anything other than the usual crowd until we heard the whistle."

About 1,000 members were in attendance, including Perkins. Perkins is the co-founder of Colorado for Family Values, which authored Amendment 2.

Kathryn Pease, a spokeswoman for Ground Zero, a local gay rights organization, said the protest had not been organized by her group, which typically takes a less-militant stance on gay rights issues than such groups as ACT-UP.

The national AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP) has staged similar protests across the country, but Pease said she didn't think that group was responsible.

"My guess would be that this was probably prompted by anger about Perkins' role in Amendment 2, the lack of national funding for AIDS research and the church stance against homosexuality."

Kuiper acknowledged his church believes homosexuality is wrong and that the gay lifestyle is at odds with Scripture.

But he said congregants Sunday "did not condemn" those who protested during services.

"People were responding with shouts of 'God bless you' and 'Come back again.' Our response to them was very, very loving."

He said the condoms were destroyed.

...ing to fight off infection — has increased.

There has been anecdotal evidence as well.

"They will talk about how good they're feeling," said Beth Bowman, a case manager at Southern Colorado AIDS Project.

Ramsey is no exception. He was diagnosed with HIV in 1986, two weeks after his partner at the time learned he too was infected.

"The way I was mentally back

with help from the... Anonymous, Ramsey quit drinking in November 1991. A few months later, he learned he was suffering from anorexia.

"I thought when I stopped drinking, 'Everything's cured now.' But when you stop drinking," he said, "you get to deal with everything else."

His sobriety, though, helped him come to grips with the eating disorder. He has also learned to communicate — something

live for the first time. "It gives you the chance to say what you want to say, forgive the people you want to forgive. And you don't have to be on your death bed to do that."

Ramsey said he isn't afraid of death. He has seen many people die. Now he believes there is life — not only beyond this world, but for him, today.

"I'm not dead yet," he said. "I'm still here."

Arena/Voters have rejected past plans

From B1

committed by the El Pomar Foundation, The Broadmoor Hotel, a Canadian developer and a local developer.

That funding package would buy an expandable, 8,000-seat arena, an undetermined amount of meeting and trade-show space and an ice-skating complex, backers say. More money — possibly raised from corporate sponsors and a special taxing district covering businesses near the project site — could allow construction of 16,000 seats and a separate convention hall.

Yet even if backers were to spell out the details, a larger problem looms — especially for the City Council.

City voters have vetoed publicly financed arenas and convention centers four times in the

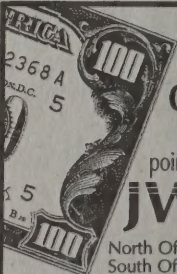
past 20 years, most recently in 1989. On top of that, after voters approved a series of city tax cuts in 1991, city officials began warning that they won't have as much to spend on streets, parks and other public improvements.

Now, they're being asked to spend money — always a politically volatile move in Colorado Springs — on a project that's been unpopular in the past. Do they chip in money, even if they think a civic center's economic benefits — tax revenues and job creation — would benefit the city?

Some are leery about doing so. Councilman John Hazlehurst, for one, suggested the city may be better off putting the question before voters. That's one of the last things civic center backers

want, however, considering the fate of past proposals.

"In the face of saying that we have all these enormous priorities," Hazlehurst said, "no matter what pocket we take the money from, if we're giving \$10 million or \$15 million for an arena-convention center, people will neither forget nor forgive."



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